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The Black Cat

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FOR TOILET AND BATH

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The Black Cat

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The Red Angel.*

BY FLORENCE TABOR CRITCHLOW.

"Ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure."

THAT college woman who once boarded with me, who'd studied Greek, and who knew all the bugs by their first names, though, to see how pretty she was you'd never guess it, used to say that angels don't mean women with nothing but wings and a head, floating around in their nightgowns. She said that an angel is just a messenger, and that anybody that runs errands for the Lord is one of His angels. If that's so, then I've had communion with angels, leastways, with one of them. I shall always maintain that our Red Angel was sent by the Lord, just as truly as though he had come on feathery wings, and had worn a brass halo. I guess that in the Lord's other worlds, the same as in this, the thing we do is more important than the clothes we wear while doing it. Maybe, too, we don't know all of His messengers.

We were living in the forest of redwoods and madrones, on a spur of Mt. Tamalpais. You would hardly believe that, less than fifteen miles from San Francisco, there is a tract so wild that men are lost there for days and days. We didn't live right in the heart of the wilderness, but on its edge. By cross-cuts,

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alleys, and long, winding, log stairs, we were only fifteen minutes from the terminal station of the electric railway.

Dwight went each day to business in the city, by this railway and the ferry, returning before nightfall. Yet, when we were at home, we were as isolated, as completely shut away from the world of men, and shut in to the world of God, as though we had lived a thousand miles from a city or a railroad. There were neighbors, of course, but we neither saw nor heard them, and I scarcely knew their names. From the highway, none could see our low, moss-shingled dwelling, nor guess its presence behind the thick wood.

The horror of the great earthquake and fire, the losses we sustained, and the subsequent hardships we endured, had turned my hair gray, though I was but twenty-four years old when it all began. Yet, I hurled a laughing defiance at fate, until, with the added shock of an incurable grief, my spirit broke, and my endurance gave way. The doctor whispered, "Nervous prostration," and advised a rest-cure.

Now there are two kinds of rest-cures in sanitariums. I've tried them both. In one kind, women in tea-gowns that drive you crazy with envy, and drive their husbands crazy with financial frenzy, sit around in hammocks and lazy-chairs, and exchange symptoms. Each proves conclusively that she is worse off than any of the others, and the most deserving of sympathy. That kind would fit me for an imbecile asylum in three months.

In the other kind you are put to bed, and see no one but your trained nurse, on whose caprices you are dependent. She treats you as she pleases and takes the real rest cure, while she writes up your chart, and tells the doctor that she has done exactly as he ordered. It may be that she kept you awake all night with running into your room on trivial errands and to consult the chart, but she calmly writes that you slept well. If you dare to complain to the doctor of her mistakes or of her neglect, she puts her finger on her brow, shakes her head, and intimates that you are out of *your* head. To the medical profession the trained nurse represents human perfection. She cannot lie, nor err, if she has written her deeds on the chart. That chart seems to be infallible, and therefore must be written by infallibility. From

the moment you enter the charge of a trained nurse you are supposed to have lost any sense you ever did have, and not to know milk from sugar. That kind of a rest cure would drive me to delirium tremens in three weeks. I should escape, addicted either to murder or to fancy-work.

I wanted rest from people, not among them; to hide me from the curious eyes and the strife of tongues. Isn't there something in the Bible about hiding in the pavilion of the Lord? Well, that was what I wanted, to find that pavilion. St. John says that there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. I've often wondered if that were not a mistranslation; it would be so much more sensible to say that there was heaven in silence. I know that when I get there I shall not be happy if I have to hang around where the croud is shouting, and singing, and twanging on harps. If it is to be heaven for me, they must let me wander off to some quiet corner, with the spirits of those who have loved solitude on earth.

The nearest that I could come to the secret of the Lord, in this world, was the bungalow in the hills of Marin County. Not far from the house, in a thicket, under a great, dark sequoia, inclosed by shrubs of live-oak and low-branching laurel, and festooned with wild honeysuckle and chilicothe vine, I made me a nest of dry sweet bay-leaves, whose healing fragrance I love. A hammock I would not have; the touch of the very earth itself was what I craved.

The earth is our true nursing mother; of her substance were we made; to it we shall return, and from it we draw our life and strength. There is food in the products of the earth, but one may take sustenance as the plants do, directly from her warm, bare, bosom. What are the mud-cures, the dew-baths, the barefoot fads, but our wiggly answers to the call of the earth, whose language we but half apprehend ? We all have this earth-hunger, only most of us, like children in the dark, don't know what we are crying for. The grave itself is only the cradle in which the earth mother rocks her children to sleep. When I die, I want no coffin, no shroud. I hope they will put my flesh against the flesh of earth.

So, all day long, I lay on the warm ground, while mind and

body rested and were healed. I wasn't ready, yet, to think. No breeze ever crept in to ruffle the leaves and whisper of the world without. The sunlight did not penetrate through the thick wall of foliage. The cool shades were good for the racked and torn spirit. I wonder if, after death, the souls of those who have come out of great pain and tribulation will not be given a rest-cure, in some leafy covert of paradise, before they are called upon to sing. Day by day, biting grief ripened into bittersweet memories, while I let myself be lured back to health.

Always Dwight came home at night before I had time to get morbid with loneliness. Never, since the hour of our great bereavement, had he left me alone after sunset. One Saturday, when he returned earlier than on other days, he teased me mysteriously into the house, and laid in my hand a flat package. I looked at the shape, and immediately knew what it was ; our long hoped-for, long delayed, insurance money. With it we meant to have, once more, a home. Unless you love your home with the persistent affection of a thousand-year-old tree, rooted and grounded in the soil, and unless you have seen that home swept into nothingness by a blast from hell, you cannot understand what that money meant to us, all that it stood for in our minds and hearts, all the memories and anticipations which were tied up in that parcel. Dwight had received it too late to get it into the bank. We must therefore take care of it until Tuesday, Monday being a holiday.

"No need to hide it elaborately," I insisted. "Since no one guesses that we have it here, no one will try to rob us. It's the men who show their money, the women who brag of their jewels, or who cry out their fear of being robbed, who attract burglars."

"True," he pondered, "but yet, there's a something in the air which tells a thief where money is."

"That's fear," I retorted. "We'll not commit the story-book folly of counting our money by lamplight before an unshaded window, or of talking about it on the highway, where any tree may conceal a tramp. We won't talk about it at all. What we do not think about, you may be sure that no one else will."

It was just then that the telephone message came. Dwight must return to the city at once, to catch the owl train to Los Angeles. It was a great trust from his employers, and the op-

portunity he had been waiting for, to show his fitness for promotion. That meant leaving me alone for three nights, possibly four. He hesitated, for he knew the awful danger. So did I, for the doctor had been wise enough to appeal to my own self-control.

"Go right along. Don't even think about me," I answered the look in his eyes. Deliberately I took the risk, believing myself well, and strong enough to resist the temptation to suicide which had threatened me at the time we left the city.

It never entered my silly head to be afraid to stay alone, not even because I had that precious money in the house to take care of. In all my life never have I been frightened by any material dangers, possibly because I have never seen anything bigger than myself. What is fear but the confession of inferiority? The badly broken horse is afraid of a scrap of flying paper, which the well-trained beast disdains, because the latter believes that his master, who is stronger than himself, must be stronger than his fear.

Dwight wanted me to promise to get one of the daughters from a neighbor's house to stay with me, nights, at least. Fortunately, he didn't have time to make the arrangements himself, as he wished to do. I knew very well that I didn't want to be mental nurse to any hysterical girl. Didn't I remember having to sit up all night with Laura Dukes, when she visited our camp at Huzza Lake? She was so religious, too, always boasting in prayer meeting of her trust in the Lord. She could trust Him in a light church, among five hundred people, but she didn't dare go to sleep in a tent, within five rods of an inhabited farmhouse. Besides, to tell one neighbor that I was alone was to advertise to Mill Valley. One might as well put a bulletin for thieves in the Post Office.

When Dwight was gone, I looked about for a safe place in which to hide that precious money. I didn't intend that it should become an Old Man of the Sea, and hang me with the weight of its terror. It should be put away, where I believed it safe, and then it should be as entirely forgotten as though it were in the bank. No tramp should be converted into a thief by observing me, in uncontrollable anxiety, digging it up to see if it were still there, — wherever it was. There wasn't a closet nor a cubby-

hole in our unplastered bungalow. I rejected all the usual secretive devices of women; mattresses, shoes, teapots, are all well known to properly educated robbers. Having made a disposal of it which was satisfactory to my own sense of concealment, I went on with preparations for the lonely evening.

Everything which I could possibly need was brought into the main living-room, which was also my sleeping-room. Last of all, I dragged in a huge heap of brush, and piled it in the great brick fireplace, ready for a cheerful house bonfire. It was still a little too early for a light, so I sat down by the window, where I could see the shadows glide over the bay as the sun, from behind the house, sank below the mountain.

A monstrous ocean of fog, thick, purple, impenetrable fog, from over Bolinas way, where fogs are born, and nurtured, and grow to swift maturity, surged over the ridge, and, dragonlike, swallowed both the sun and the moon. With the early darkness without, there fell upon my spirit a more awful shadow. The demon of melancholia, against whom the doctor and my husband had guarded me, seized upon my soul, and carried it to his own place, prepared for those who love him. Little devils called the memories of lost joys came to sting me. Winged imps of forbidden hopes mocked and taunted me. I wondered where God was. I used to know God, in the far away hours of happiness. Why, I knew Him so well that I used to talk familiarly to Him, ask favors of Him, tell Him all my troubles, in the most intimate and friendly manner. Think of knowing Emperor Wilhelm well enough to ask him to cure your toothache!

In the days of the Great Desolation, when the earth rocked and opened, and the flames of hell were let loose, I said that there is no God. If by God we mean a tender Father, then, I said, such a thing is not. The Ruler of the Universe, I cried in my angry judgment, who tramples thus upon His children, as we step on loathsome insects in our path, must be a fiend. Nor, since those dreadful words, had I ever been able to find God. In the long restful days under the redwoods, since leaving the city, I had discovered that God lives, but where was He? Why not find out?

I had long ago lost all desire to live, all interest in the problems

of living, yet, in the vacuity of my despair I had not found any motive for dying which was strong enough to force me into action. It hardly seemed worth while to die merely to save the trouble of living. But to die for the purpose of finding a lost God appealed to my adventurous nature. It sounded like heroism, possibly martyrdom. Most suicides, I believe, have their origin in a pseudo-martyrdom. For the first time in many months I had found something to do which was interesting, something which stirred my blood to eagerness.

I could find the laudanum in the dark, for it stood away off in a corner by itself, where it could not be reached without intention. My hand was already on the bottle of oblivion, the tiny bell attached to the cork had rung its useless warning, when another sound caught and drew my self-centred attention. Fog is a muffler of the ordinary noises, so that any unusual sound is heard with startling distinctness. Footsteps were coming up the trail. I could not be mistaken. They came nearer — passed around the house. Was some one looking for an open window? Had some idler seen Dwight go away, on Saturday night, and come to prowl about a supposedly vacant house? There, he came up the steps; he paused at the door; he knocked, or, rather, loudly thumped. The sound was more like a cane rapping on the porch floor than like a hand on the door.

Bad men do not often proclaim their presence thus loudly. On the other hand, this seeming innocence might be only a ruse to make sure that no one was at home, before attempting to break in. In either case, the boldest plan was the safest for meeting the intruder. I went to the door, with a lighted lamp in my hand. No man stood without. Had he gone so quickly into the shadows of the trees? I could hear quick breathing. Some one, something, brushed by my feet, into the dim room. I turned the lamp in my hand, and looked downward.

My visitor was the handsomest collie I have ever seen, though I am a lover of dogs, and familiar with prize winners. In the glow of the lamp his coat shone like red gold. He looked up at me with such dear, pleading eyes, that I dropped right down on the floor and put my arms around his head. How can any one help like a dog? He is just a bundle of animated love.

"Oh," I cried, "you great, beautiful, red — angel, you."

If you'll believe it, he actually thumped his splendid brush as though that might be his name and he recognized it, rather, was pleased to have me recognize him. I never heard of such a name for a dog, but I don't know why it should not be, so I called him by it. A dog likes to be known by his name, just as a Chinaman does. He was the first dog I had hugged since the soldiers, on that dreadful April day, shot down my beautiful Irish setter, Freckles.

Red Angel smacked his lips, a dog's natural way of saying that he is hungry, when his intelligence hasn't been ruined by foolish tricks. That made me remember that I had had no dinner. It was so late, nearly midnight, that I made tea and toast on the alcohol lamp, and fed my guest a big bowl of bread and milk. No wonder the little devils got me. A good dinner has more power of exorcism than a sermon.

Red Angel sat down in front of the fireplace, where he knew that warmth ought to be, and suggestively shivered. His coat was wet with fog. He must have been out for hours, yet his every action showed that he was no vagabond, but a dog aristocrat, a house pet, accustomed to shelter and comfort. I lighted the brush pile. We both felt more cheerful. A bright fire is good religion. I have always had sympathy with the fire-worshippers. The night was more than half over before we went to bed. Red Angel contentedly lay on a rug by the fire, where the embers continued to give out a comforting warmth.

I slept shamefully late the next morning, much to my gratification, for that meant so much time less for getting lonely. When I looked at the clock I thought only that Dwight was that many hours nearer home, he having just reached Los Angeles. Meals, prolonged as much as possible, romps with the Red Angel, who proved to have great powers of sociability, and a new magazine Dwight had brought from the city, made bedtime come quickly. This night, Red Angel gave me to understand that he preferred to sleep out-of-doors. I suspected that he meant to go away as unconventionally as he had come.

To escape the melancholy which I could not resist, I took a double dose of sulphonal, hoping that it would hold my senses

until late in the following forenoon. I had come to dread each day's awakening to grief. When under the influence of this depressing drug, I was more than asleep; I was so nearly dead to the world that it had been proved impossible to waken me until its effects had worn away of itself.

Sometime during the night I heard, far off, and as a part of my dark dream, the barking of a dog. Now the dogs of Mill Valley nearly outnumber the men. What is it that monks call the prayers and songs executed at midnight? Well, that is evidently what the dogs wake for, though one would scarcely accuse them of a religious purpose. But who knows what dim superstitions may rule them? Here in the Valley they resolved themselves into an antiphonal chorus, ranged upon opposite hillsides, and conducted midnight rehearsals.

On this occasion it seemed to me that there was an uncommonly loud and aggressive solo. I could hear the insistent voice of a single dog, a large dog, if voice were any indication. At first, it was far off, miles away, I judged. It might even be on the other side of the town, sound carries so far across those ravines. I wondered how the voice of a dog so distant should have awakened me. But was it so distant? Somehow came the knowledge that noise was very near to the house; it was I who was far away. My senses were at last returning from their journey to the dim unknown, were hovering over my body, which lay in stupid slumber. For some reason, perhaps because it was a drugged and not a natural sleep, the senses could not get in. I was helpless, I could not move, as it seemed to me, until soul and body were joined.

I do not mean to say that such a separation actually occurred; only that in this absurd manner I reasoned out why I did not waken. For, though I could not move, though I felt myself held in some terrible fashion, I knew that some one was trying to enter my open window, that Red Angel was barking a furious alarm, and that I could not make myself come to his assistance. If Red Angel had not been there I should not have roused even to so much of consciousness.

I heard the man leave the window and run toward the barn, around the barn, and back to the house, in a vain endeavor to

escape the tracking dog. I could plainly distinguish his position, and the relative position of the dog. Red Angel was evidently keeping just out of reach of a possible club. If the man were armed! There was a clutch at my throat which almost woke me, for already I had come to love the dog. But evidently he was not armed, or he would have fired upon his enemy. I remembered reading that professional burglars do not carry weapons.

Again and again I tried to waken. I could not move my body. It was heavy, so heavy that I wondered how I have ever been able to wear it. Ever I kept that sensation of being separated from it, of being unable to get into it. The man passed twice around the house, and I heard him running down the trail. I feared that this was only a trick to lure away the dog, perhaps to keep him away while a confederate entered the house, or possibly to take him to where he could be poisoned. The dog, however, knew better than to abandon his charge, if, indeed, the man had such thoughts as I attributed to him. Red Angel stopped at the point where our trail joined the public highway, listened for a time, and came slowly back, muttering angrily, as one balked of his due vengeance.

Then, at last, when all need was over, I woke. I was inclined to believe myself the victim of a peculiarly realistic nightmare, until I heard the low, vicious growl of the dog. Having assured himself that the unwelcome intruder was not slyly returning up the trail, Red Angel made a tour of the garden, around the house and around the barn, and so back to his post at the front door. I knew, without farther question, that I had not merely dreamed. I knew, too, that I owed my safety to the dog. For otherwise, I should have known nothing of the visitor of evil, though he had actually entered the house, carried off whatever it contained of value, and even murdered me, if personal injury were his object.

The effect of the sulphonal was wholly gone. I should sleep no more this night. I therefore rose, made a big blaze with logs in the fireplace, for I was shivering with a nervous chill, and called in my protector. How did we pass the remainder of the night? I'm sure I don't know. I think I called Red Angel in

and kissed him. I know that I fed him, partly as the only reward which he was likely to appreciate, and partly as a guard against any effort to poison him, should the robber come back. It seems to me that I laughed heartily at the Angel's absurd anger. It was a long time since I had laughed with such genuine enjoyment. I made a breakfast for myself, and ate it with more pleasure than I had recently found in food.

And then there came upon me one of those ridiculous impulses by which each of us is swayed at times, and for which none of us can give any rational account. I would go up the mountain to see the sun rise; I would spend the day in roaming. Formerly I had been accustomed to long walks, often entirely alone. Since we had been in Mill Valley I had sturdily resisted all of Dwight's entreaties to resume the old custom. There was nothing to walk for, no place to walk to, no person to walk with. In fact, walking had come to seem a very silly performance. Nothing in life had seemed worth doing any more. The foam was all blown off, the flavor all vanished.

It may be that, somewhere in the back of my brain, there was a little cell of fear that the robber might return, a feeling that I did not want to be in the house if he should come back. Why such an absurdity should appeal to me, I don't know, and I don't believe that it did have anything to do with my wish to get away. It is Dwight's suggestion, in trying to understand my actions on that day, that I was moved by an unconscious fear. Certainly, if I had known fear, it would have been wiser to telephone for aid, or to have gone to stay with some one of the neighbors. It is, however, the actual truth, that I never thought of either alternative. In the city the telephone would instantly have suggested the summoning of the police, but in this village it only meant a quick way of ordering groceries. In fact, I am quite sure that I did not think of the man as a robber, but only as a prowler.

I still contend that in what I did that day I was not influenced by fear. Something about the incident, perhaps the getting up in the night to feed the dog, and have a romp with him, had roused my long dormant girlish spirit of adventure. Once more, I felt like doing things. In the choice of the thing I should do,

and in the manner of doing it, I was driven by the same uncontrollable impulse as when, but one night before, I had set out to find God. If the truth could be known concerning those invisible guiding connections in the brain, between our thoughts and our deeds, perhaps it was upon the same quest that I was starting, with the difference that I now hoped to find Him in this world instead of elsewhere.

The moon, which would be full the next night, was just sinking behind the southern shoulder of Mt. Tamalpais, and the first pale finger of the dawn was pointing over Mt. Diablo, when I stepped out from the dense shadow of the wood. There had been no fog this night. Indeed, it is rarely that we get heavy fog with a waxing moon. That on Saturday night had been born out of its time. Across the bay shone the lights of San Francisco. The great winking eye of Alcatraz guarded the harbor, and so the nation.

That silent half-hour in heaven must be just before daydawn. The world then is all new; life is waiting to begin. I was all alone, not the last human being, as in Byron's fantasy, but the first. The whole beautiful universe had been created just for me, and was coming to life as I watched. Men have often speculated as to Adam's sensations when the sun first went down and he first experienced the terrible darkness. It is my belief that Adam was born before daybreak, that he knew the silence, the wonder, and the exquisite beauty of the night before he ever saw the sun, and that when the sun went down on his first day, Adam rejoiced at the return of the stars and all the heavenly quiet of the dark.

From no other easily accessible point in our land, at least, is there a view so vast, so varied, so grand and yet so tenderly beautiful, as that from the summit of Mt. Tamalpais. I knew, all at once, that it is very good to be alive in a world which contains such a joy to look upon. It was good to feel the spring of the earth under my feet, good to see the changing lights in the sky, the changing shadows on earth.

Why had I never noticed the delicious green of the madrone leaves, so different from the sombre needles of the sequoia? What a tender coloring of palest green has the inner bark of

the same tree, when it splits its outer coat of burnt orange for its annual moulting! No painter has ever made a satisfactory study of the madrone. Is it because the artists recognize their inability to reproduce all its weird beauty, its message of joyful resurrection, the strange grace of its odd shapes, the exquisite coloring of its bark as well as of its rich foliage, its delicate waxen bells and dainty berries? Why else, if they *can* paint madrones, do they neglect them, year after year, for their monotonous iteration of the Berkely oaks and the Monterey cypress?

Once, as I rested, I saw a bird, of the precise coloring of the madrone on which he sat; burnt orange, pale lemon, and palest green, a transparent green, like that of rarest beryl. I breathed, and he was gone, a flash of orange through the blue ether. Yet he is one of my possessions through all time, and — well, yes, why not through eternity, if immortality consist in the persistence of memory?

That was late in the afternoon. I had had a glorious day, and found a glorious world. All day I had roamed over the slopes of Tamalpais, but to me it was the mount of transfiguration. Only once to each of us, in this life, is it given to stand on that summit. I had awakened from a very bad dream, and found a new heaven and a new earth. Will the awakening after death be like that, I wonder, with the sorrows of earth fading into a pleasant half-consciousness, as dreams slip out of the memory? Somewhere out there on the mountain, somewhere in the fastnesses of the forest, I had found God again. He wasn't my own particular God, such as I used to talk to with such familiarity, but He was the God of all the world. I had found Him, not beyond the waters of oblivion, where I should have gone but for the advent of my Angel, but in the splendid life and boundless energies of this living earth, and He had answered to the unspoken call of my soul, more perfectly than He had ever responded to my carefully worded prayers.

Red Angel had refused to accompany me, making it quite clear that he considered himself the guardian of the house rather than of my person. I found him, when I reached home, pacing like a sentinel up and down the entire accessible length of our grounds.

A covey of young quail ran along beside, fearless of him whose eye, they knew, was for larger and more dangerous game.

Late that evening Dwight came home, though I had not expected him until the next night. Red Angel could not be supposed to know him from an intruder, yet, by that subtle sense which beasts have and men have lost, he recognized in him the master of the house. Quite silently he stood by and watched our greetings. Convinced that all was now right, he surrendered his duty of guardianship. With all that dignity of which a collie is so conscious, he walked over to the most secluded corner, lay down with his face to the wall, and sighed. It was a sigh of relief over duty well performed. With that he went soundly asleep.

Dwight usually can't resist a dog, but this night his mind was so intent upon something else that I doubt if he even saw the new member of our household. When he had built a fire of big logs in the great brick fireplace, he sat down for the long confidential talk which is the feature of our evenings together.

"Anything happen while I was gone?" he asked, in a manner altogether too casual to be quite natural. He was afraid to startle my sick nerves by coming directly to the things he feared. I wanted to laugh out, to tell him that my nerves were quite cured.

"Nothing much," I answered, lightly. I can be casual, too, when I choose. I didn't intend to tell of my curious experience, and have it laughed down as a dream.

"Money all right?"

I did jump, at that. It seems incredible, but it is absolutely true, that I hadn't thought of the money since I put it away. I couldn't even remember what I did do with it. I looked up at Dwight with an expression which frightened him. He thought that I had been robbed, that the discovery of the loss had so worked upon me that I was afraid to tell him. What I thought was, that I must be going mad. Had the robber been in the house, before I woke? What *did* I do with that parcel? Those hours of despondency had wiped out all memory of the money.

"Heard of any burglaries in town?" he questioned, trying to lead me up to confession. I shook my head, absently. What had I done with that money? I could recall nothing of that Sat-

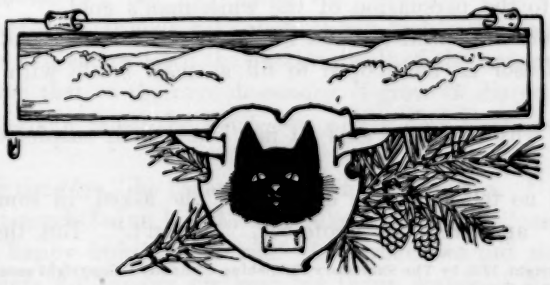
urday afternoon except fixing the brush in the fireplace. What had I done before that, when I was looking for a hiding place? Dwight watched my face.

"Man on the ferry, coming over to-night," he talked while he poked the fire, "was telling me that professional burglars were in town last night. At least a dozen houses were ransacked, all in this immediate neighborhood. I was a little worried about you."

At that, I related my own curious experience; one could hardly call it an adventure. So soon as I began, Red Angel came over to Dwight's chair, rested his head on my husband's knee, and looked steadily up into his face. He seemed to be asking if he had done all that was expected of him. When I finished, and the dog had been petted and praised, Dwight went back to his fire-poking.

"Funny," he remarked, "how paper will get buried in the ashes, and never catch fire." With the hook at the end of his poker he pulled out a bunch of dirty yellow paper, which he was trying to punch into the flame. With a leap I snatched at it with my bare hands, just in time. The edges were scorched, but only of the wrapper. Within were the bills, intact, just as I had buried them in the ashes. I had piled the brush to look as though it were ready for a blaze, but had not intended to set fire to it.

The dog was scratching at the door. I opened it for him. He went out into the darkness of the forest, and into the more impenetrable shadow of mystery from whence he had come. We never saw him again.



The Saving of His Honor.*

BY SHIRLEY WAY BEEBE.

UT of the cool, dim quiet of the virgin forest, into the dazzling sunlight of the open, came two men. The first, a swarthy six-foot Indian, lowered the canoe which he carried, bottom upward over his shoulders, to the ground, and straightened with apparent relief. He watched the other, a smaller, bewhiskered, four-eyed professor, as he dumped the camp impedimenta beside the canoe, and gazed exultantly at the broad expanse of dancing lake before them.

At their feet lay a small beach of pearly sand, the offering of the turbulent Kash-She, which came rollicking and tumbling down the rocks at their side. Before them, in all the splendor of its August habiliments, stretched the island-studded lake. The high rocky shores, thickly clothed in sombre evergreen, like ivy-grown castle walls, overshadowed and guarded the sparkling emerald.

For some minutes the men stood motionless, absorbed in contemplation of the scene. No sound save the soft melody of Nature's inimitable harmony accosted the ear. The waves caressed the softly shining sand, the Kash-She babbled and sang to the rocks, and the great pine confided mysteriously to the hemlock that never before had a Pale-face beheld the lake, and the hemlock shook its head disdainfully at the Indian who had so shamelessly yielded to the persuasion of the white-man's gold.

The Indian seemed to hear, for he moved uneasily and watched the Professor as he stooped to fill a small bottle with the lake sand.

"For why you take em? Um?" he asked, suspiciously.

"For fun."

"You no tell some one dis place?" he asked, in some alarm.

"No," answered the Professor, "I won't." But the Indian

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caught the gleam in his eyes, like the golden gleam in the wet sand, and he knew the man lied.

Together they slid the canoe into the water and stowed the baggage in the bow. As they shot swiftly, silently out from the shore, the man in front did not see the expression of wicked determination on the usually stoical face of the Redman.

"Stroke, stroke, stroke," went the paddles.

"Splash, splash, splash," sang the waves in rhythmic accompaniment.

They were half way down the lake. To the right, a high, rocky island rose out of the dancing waters. The Professor's stroke stopped short, and turning to his companion, he pointed to the precipitous wall of the island.

"Take me over there, Shilling," he directed.

"Ugh!" the Indian shrugged his shoulders. "Heap no good place."

"I didn't ask you what kind of a place it was, I said to take me over there."

"Ugh, ugh," came the answer, with another shrug of the shoulders, and the canoe turned in the other direction.

"Here," said the Professor, as he pulled a bill from his pocket, "that's all I have here, but I'll give you more when we get back."

The Indian shook his head, and then, as though a sudden idea had occurred to him, his eyes flashed wickedly, and he took the proffered money.

Toward the centre of the island they found a landing place, and from it a path, half hidden by underbush, led away toward the headland on the upper end.

The Indian led the way along the path, till presently they stopped before a circular hole about thirty feet in diameter. The afternoon sun shone down the opposite wall of the natural cavern and showed that as the cave descended it grew in diameter.

The Redman faced the Professor, and a new light was in his eyes.

"Long time 'go," he began, "Injun find hole here. Have heap big fight; much Injun killed. We take 'em, an' put 'em in hole. They go happy hunting grounds. Lots years we put more here — big chiefs, an' squaws, an' heap big Injun braves — all in here.

If white-man come, he maybe find 'em an' dig 'em up. You no tell some one dis place? No?"

The Indian watched catlike as the Professor stared in excitement at a piece of quartz which he had picked up. His eyes gleamed with avarice, for in the quartz were tiny golden seams and all about him lay tons more of it.

"You no tell some one dis place? No?" repeated the Indian.

"No," came the half-hearted answer.

"You lie um like Hell," he yelled and sprang for the Professor.

The smaller man was quick and they closed in a tight embrace, neither one having the advantage. Back and forth, a battle royal, they wrestled. Closer to the yawning pit they moved. The Professor's foot went over the edge, and in his excitement he lost his hold. The Indian shook him off and jumped back, but not quick enough, for his foot was seized in a death grasp, and he had barely time to close his arms about a projecting rock.

He lay on his face, hugging tight the saving boulder, his legs hung down the hole, and from one moccasined foot dangled the Professor. His foot moved and slowly the moccasin slipped off.

A dull thud came from the cavernous depths, and the Indian drew himself up. For a moment, he stood on the edge of the pit, listening and peering into the darkness below. Then he drew from his pocket a roll of bills and casting them into the depths, he turned toward the path.

The westering sun cast long wavering shadows across the placid lake and twilight deepened. The Whip-poor-will and Bob-white called mournfully. Now and then, an adventurous fish splashed and ruffled the glassy lake.

Sounds of day ceased and as darkness closed in the frogs and crickets took up the refrain and chorused loudly. Through the eastern tree-tops, a timid moon peered out, silhouetting the rocks and woods till they looked like charred and blackened ruins of some destroyed city.

The Bob-white and Whip-poor-will were silent, the fish no more splashed, the frogs and crickets ceased their trilling, and all Nature seemed hushed and expectant. The moon rose higher. When at last, shaking herself free from the encumbering woods, she stood resplendent, flooding the lake with her sil-

very beauty. Nature's great chorus broke forth again in one glad anthem of joy and praise to the glorious Queen of Night.

Softly on the breeze came the rhythmic splash of a paddle, and the moon, shining brighter, pointed out the solitary figure in a canoe far down the lake. With head erect, he paddled on toward a white gleam of sandy beach. The paddling ceased and the canoe grated on the sand. On one side, a tall pine, and on the other, its cousin, the hemlock, stretched out their arms in proud welcome.

What Became of Petit — Diable?*

BY MARY GRAHAM MORRISON RAYNAL.

WHILE the Gallic element in Pierre Thompson, the bequest of his Creole mother, thrilled at the touch of romance or superstition, the Saxon element looked on in humorous appreciation, ready to apply the brake at the proper moment. Thus Pierre was to be trusted, judicially as well as emotionally.

It was through this dual nature of his that he was enabled to deal so successfully with his islanders. A long string of islets off the Alabama coast claimed Pierre as their lord. Mere dots in the gulf most of them were, worthless bits of scrub palmetto. One, some miles in extent, however, was settled by a mongrel breed of squatters, in whom French, Spanish, and African blood showed in turn dangerous characteristics. Pierre, on coming into his inheritance, found that much of his revenue remained uncollected through the cowardice of his agents. Fired by love of adventure he took upon himself this duty. His audacity and radiant youth swept all before it. The islanders, so lately armed against the agents, were now ready to fight to the death in the cause of Pierre. His quarterly trips were triumphal marches.

On the first of these trips he discovered Petit — Diable. The child had other names, so claimed Mère Hélène, the ghoulish old woman in whose hut he lived, but from the time he could toddle he had been so shocking, so uncanny in his naughtiness that he was known only as the little devil of the island. Such a fearless and fascinating little wretch, with it all, was Petit — Diable that Pierre lost his warm heart to him on the spot. He never stayed away long enough to forget his wee friend, and as for Petit — Diable, he was always on the watch, ready to fall upon M'sieu with frantic embraces, casting a keen eye, meanwhile, on any bulge in his pocket suggestive of a toy.

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On Pierre's landing in September he found his eye roving over the waiting group for one ardent little brown face, and his welcome seemed cold without the clasp of the lean little arms.

"Where is Petit — Diable?" was his first question.

The jabbering was hushed to a queer, constrained silence. Each nudged the other to speak up like a man and tell M'sieu of this strange thing that had befallen them.

"Hurry up there," urged Pierre, "where's the kid?"

"*Petit—Diable allai* —" the spokesman rolled his eyes helplessly at his neighbors for assistance.

"Evidently he's *allai-ed,* but where?" persisted Pierre.

Bit by bit he extracted the story, which finally came in a rushing chorus. On the preceding Friday, so they said, Mère Hélène had sent the child down to the beach for a panful of white sand for her floor. He did not return. This excited no alarm at first, promptness not being expected of such a truant as Petit — Diable; but when dinner passed, and night was settling down, Mère Hélène herself had gone to look for him. On the beach she found the empty pan, a little further on the sand was torn up as if by a struggle, and that was all. They had helped the old woman search, all through the night, the child was gone.

"An alligator?" suggested Pierre, only to be reminded that the alligators were all back in the hammocks.

"A shark?"

"It happened at ebb-tide, M'sieu."

That superstition was holding back their own explanation Pierre divined, his Gallic blood rising in anticipation. With thumping heart he shrank away from the old woman who croaked in his ear:

"There was the track of a cloven hoof, M'sieu."

Collecting his wits sufficiently to go in search of Mère Hélène, Pierre found her skulking in her cabin well nigh crazed with grief. Petit—Diable when alive had been her torment, but without him life was an abomination of desolation. Melting under the force of M'sieu's sympathy she recounted the ill omens that had attended the child's birth, and found speedy development in his pitiful little life. That he was possessed by an evil spirit she had feared from the first, the devil had but carried off his own.

Pierre shivered in the blistering sunshine. The heavy tropical odors sickened him. With all haste he set sail, and was far out in the gulf before he remembered the uncollected rent.

A little later the young woman whom Pierre delighted to honor visited Mobile, and, now that she was here, he was in a panic over entertaining her. If a girl has blossomed in New York society, and been to London and seen the queen, what is there left for a southern fellow to show her? Of course there were dinners and dances, and then, Pierre having confided in his twelve bosom friends, there were more dinners and dances. Finally it occurred to him that a cruise on the gulf might offer something in the way of diversion. He was all for renting a yacht, he would cheerfully have chartered a man-of-war, when the girl herself interposed in favor of a sailboat that Pierre used on his trips to the island. The primitive old craft, in consequence, blossomed into a splendor of new rugs, and cushions, and canvases.

The twelve bosom friends, each joying in the presence of his own lady love, were on board, to say nothing of such necessities as sailors and chaperons, when Pierre came dashing up with the guest of honor. Gay little south winds filling the sails, the boat swept down the bay and out into the gulf; and when a round moon came up out of the water Pierre was blissful to the point of pain. He had brought his guitar along, naturally, and what song so voiced the love and longing of the hour as "Mandalay?" Pierre grew eloquent over the Burma girl, who was

> "A-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:
> Bloomin' idol made o' mud
> Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd —
> Plucky lot she cared for idols when I
> Kissed 'er where she stood!"

Emotion, unfortunately, so twisted his tongue that he bungled the most personal lines, and gazing deep into the eyes of his divinity, warbled:

> "I've a cleaner, greener maiden in a neater sweeter land!"

The twelve bosom friends having laughed unnecessarily, he made that an excuse for taking her as far away from them as the boat permitted. Seated on the bow, amid vivifying dashes of

salt spray, Pierre found courage to murmur of his love. She listened first with tender raillery to the sweet folly of his love-making, and then, as he grew more imperative, a silence fell upon her, and she ended by promising to think about it. In a delirium of joy, Pierre tossed through the long night and came on deck in the morning a limp rag of himself possessed, in the natural reaction, by the fear that a woman's promise to "think about it" is but her gentle way of letting a fellow down. The glare of the sun was intolerable, and the twelve bosom friends devoted themselves to the guest of honor with exasperating ardor.

As night came on gusts of wind swept across the gulf, patches of cloud obscured the glare, some one made an uneasy reference to this season of equinoctial storms. Pierre would have given his world to be rid of this unpleasant pleasuring, but like a modern Casabianca he had to stand his deck, and presently all thought of self was swallowed up in a great fear for the safety of his guests. The wind had now risen to an ominous whistle, before which the frail craft sped like a wan ghost of her former self. The fickle waves had turned upon them furiously. Gripped by this southern storm, they were threatened momentarily with submergence.

The Saxon element was now in the ascendency, Pierre was battling with Death for his beloved. When the storm was at its height he went into the cabin, where she faced him piteously white but very still. For a long minute he held the cold little hands, and then silently left her, left her strengthened and comforted with a new courage surging through his own heart.

Outside again, there was a depth of darkness ahead suggestive to Pierre of land. For hours past they had been scurrying in the direction of his own islands. Another hour and the flickering hope had become a certainty. The boat managed somehow to miss the reefs, the current sweeping her with eager haste into the sound, where the still water made landing possible. They were now close enough to recognize the characteristics of the islet, and Pierre was giving directions for the landing, when the negro cook clutched his arm.

"Boss," he quavered, "fur de Lawd's sake doan put in dar."

"Why, you old fool, you ought to thank the Lord for the chance to put in."

"But it's h'anted, Boss," he protested frantically, his old face ashen with terror. "It's h'anted!"

"H'ants, nothing! Take hold of that rope."

In cheerful defiance of superstition, and great thankfulness of spirit, the draggled party struggled up the beach. A hard, sandy slope stretched back for some distance from the water, broken only by broken clumps of yucca, which clawed at them as they fought their way inward to the sheltering palmettoes. The rain had subsided to a mournful drizzle, the wind had died out, save for an occasional convulsive burst. Having selected a secure spot for a camp, the men made painful trips to the boat for food and canvases, spurred on by the fear that when the tide changed the boat would be wrenched from her moorings.

The flames of the attempted fire trembling out before the soggy wood, they huddled under one of the dripping trees, their voices drowned by the booming of the waves, their eyes strained out into the darkness. A jungle of palmettoes back of them reared black heads against the murky sky. Above them towered an immense dead sycamore, its every limb gleaming with the silvery whiteness peculiar to the tree. While untouched by decay there was not a leaf to break its grim outline, and even in this darkness it radiated a light of its own. The very ghost of a tree it seemed, the monarch of this haunted islet.

There being nothing to tempt late lingering the little company soon sought the shelter of their canvases, the deep sleep of exhausted youth presently brooding over the camp. Without a shadow of warning Pierre found himself bolt upright, his heart thumping to suffocation. Within his ears rang the echo of a shriek. Too dazed to reason he felt a contortion spread over the camp, each man struggling to his feet, reaching trembling hands out into the darkness, clutching with comfort the tangible form of his fellow man.

The first thought of their returning faculties was that some accident had befallen the women. Speeding to their rescue they found them paralyzed with fear, but safe. Even as they essayed some explanation the shriek came again, a wail that rose and broke over them and trailed off into a shrill of unutterable anguish. The sound seemed to come from above, splitting the

silence with the wide-spread strength of a foghorn. Half dragging, half carrying the fainting women, they fled down the beach. The boat still tugged at her moorings and into it they fell. The current swept them from the shore, and on they fled into the dark world of waters pursued by that woeful shrieking.

The horrors of that night were mitigated, for Pierre, by the brilliancy of the days that followed. Out of the darkness and doubt there had come to him a blissful content, and it was not until a certain young woman left Mobile that he could bring himself to investigate the cause of their alarm. Finally he returned to the island, accompanied by a scientist who contended that there must be some physical explanation for the phenomenon. He had with him, also, a member of a society for Psychical Research, who conversed learnedly of theosophy, and of the detachability of astral bodies.

The little beach and bit of forest were prosaic enough by daylight, and above them the old sycamore drowsed harmlessly in the sun. The camp was unmolested, save for the food which had been devoured by the birds. A bevy of coots, at their approach, rustled out of the trees, and went skimming across the water like black shadows. The scientist tapped the roots of the firm old tree disappointedly, the psychist continued to argue. As for Pierre he was nervous and distraught on this scene of conflicting memories.

Just as they were leaving he spied a small bunch, not unlike a nest, in a high fork of the sycamore. On examining it with field glasses he saw that it was a roll of cloth. One of the sailors made the difficult ascent of the tree, scaled the last slim limb, and pulling out the carefully folded bundle dropped it to the waiting group below. Then, and not till then did Pierre recognize the familiar little garments. To further establish their identity he carried them over to the inhabited island. Yes, the natives agreed, this was what Petit—Diable had worn when he was spirited away, a ragged little gingham shirt and a tiny pair of trousers.

The Royal Firman.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

OHAMMED MIRZA, Governor of Ispahan, kissed and bent to touch the royal firman with his forehead. The elaborate scroll had come in a beautifully embroidered cover, was sealed with the imperial signet of the Lion and the Sun, and had been delivered into the Governor's hand by a special courier riding with all speed from Teheran. Mohammed Mirza, sitting in the beroon, audience chamber of his palace, gravely unfolded the scroll, and passed his eyes from the usual lengthy high sounding preamble to the pith of the document, invariably to be found at the end of Persian missives. Such a shock of surprise did Mohammed Mirza meet with, that he was on the verge of committing treason by almost dropping the firman. This was what overwhelmed his self-controlled manner.

His Majesty, the Shah in Shah, King of Kings, after complimenting Mohammed Mirza on his many excellent qualities as a faithful subject, stated simply that to mark his august recognition of the same, he had decided to confer upon the Governor of Ispahan a royal Princess for a wife. The lady was then on her way, and would arrive close on the heels of the courier. The Shah expressed his conviction that Mohammed Mirza would receive the Princess with every consideration due to her exalted rank.

That was the substance of the firman, a bolt out of turquoise sky of Ispahan descending upon the head of the Governor. For these reasons: When the Shah bestows a lady of imperial rank upon a subject, that settles the matter as far as the subject is concerned. Whether she be old or young, beautiful or quite unattractive, the subject must take his chance in those respects when he lifts her veil for the first time. In return for this doubtful

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honor, the subject is expected to send a present to the Shah which spells at least temporary bankruptcy. Beyond this he must divorce any other wife he may possess, and maintaining a strictly monogamous state for the rest of his days, live in constant fear of displeasing his imperial, and possibly imperious wife, lest she report him to the Shah with awkward consequences. It is not an honor much coveted by the Lords of Iran.

This then was the situation confronting Mohammed Mirza, who, being deeply attached to his single wife, recoiled in dismay and horror at the prospect of being compelled to divorce her in favor of a Princess of the Imperial Family. He would willingly have paid twice the value of the return present to escape the honor, but since the lady was on the way relief by that means, diplomatically tendered through the proper channel, was impossible.

When Mohammed Mirza recovered from the first effect of the mental blow, he rose and dismissed his attendants. Then he paced the long room, resplendent with a scintillating mural decoration of thousands of cubes of mirror glass, an intricately carved ceiling, silken rugs of pearl-like sheen covering the few pieces of furniture, and with one side open to a court containing a miniature rose garden and a pool of clear water. The roses were in the first blossom of springtide, and their fragrance stole into the audience chamber, but without any soothing effect on the distracted Governor.

Mohammed Mirza had indeed been a faithful servant of the Shah. He had stood between the Shah and the party of revolution, had, in fact, on one occasion shielded the Shah's person from the hand of an assassin. If necessary he was ready to fall in the Shah's service, but — but this demand of the firman destroyed the very sanctuary of his life. To divorce his wife in favor of the Princess was to sacrifice his greatest treasure, an unthinkable act, revolting to the best in his nature.

Mohammed Mirza, like many other Orientals, was entirely happy in the possession of a single wife. No other woman had shared his trials, his fortune, or his affection. She was the star guiding his path upward, and much was due to her that he had come to be regarded as the most popular and enlightened Gover-

nor of Ispahan. To divorce her, to take another woman in her place, even a Princess, was impossible.

He looked for a cause in this sudden act of the Shah. A man in his position naturally had enemies, and he suspected the hand of one of the Shah's ministers working for his downfall, if not succeeding politically, then through the ruin of his happiness. And he was practically helpless. He paced the inlaid floor, with head bent downward, deep in thought.

At last he halted with features contracted into a resolution. There was one alternative, by which he could maintain his unalterable attachment to his wife, and appease the Shah's resentment according to ancient custom. It lay in a small cup of black coffee, bitter to the taste, but of instantaneous effect. As soon as he had received the Princess with due ceremony he would drain the cup of coffee. That was his decision. Curiously enough having reached such a determination his mind was relieved. The matter was settled. It was Kismet — Fate. That is why you see the condemned man in Persia calmly smoking a pipe and chatting with his friends, while the executioner sharpens his blade or ties the slip knot.

Mohammed Mirza then proceeded to see his wife for the last time, but without any exhibition of emotion. What he felt, must lie hidden beneath a bearing becoming to a brave man, according to the Oriental standard. Thus he seated himself upon the divan beside her, and talked for some time upon their mutual interests, offering here and there a word of advice which he trusted she would remember.

As usual she performed such little attentions as sprinkling him with rose water, and adjusting the ornamented mouthpiece of his kalyan. With calm outward admiration he watched her graceful movements, but the caress of her hand, touching the quick of his affection, almost broke down his stoical fortification. He recovered his poise by reasoning that as her sorrow would come soon enough, why add to its prolonged intensity by grief in advance? Still, he thought she should not be confronted with it utterly unprepared.

"Zeneh," he began, gravely. "I have this morning received a firman from Our Lord the Shah. In it he speaks of a Princess

who is about to visit Ispahan. You will receive her with all hospitality, my wife."

"Assuredly, O Mohammed," she responded, with the light of pleasurable anticipation kindling in her eyes. "I will order her apartments to be made ready, and plan for her entertainment."

Mohammed Mirza nodded slowly. After a slight pause of reflection he went on:

"That is well spoken. Whatever happens, remember the Persian obligation that the guest must not be distressed by the misfortune of a host."

She turned a questioning look upon him, to perceive his serious expression.

"Do you expect misfortune, O my lord?" she asked with a shade of anxiety in her voice.

"Misfortune may come at any time," he replied, evasively. "It is the Will of Allah that we should be prepared to encounter it at all seasons. In this case the Shah's firman requires that I go upon a journey shortly after the arrival of the Princess. I may be absent a day, a month, or a year. That is in the hands of Allah. But I know you will keep watch for my return, O my wife!"

"Assuredly, my lord. You ever possess my love. But is there danger in this journey?" she questioned.

"In all journeys there is danger," he answered. "There is danger if I but ride through the street of Ispahan. While I sit here there is danger — chiefly in myself. Allah knows when I shall return, or when you will come to meet me. That is why I have spoken on this matter."

Mohammed Mirza turned his head to notice one of the eunuchs standing in an entrance, from which he had drawn the curtains aside.

"Well, Salim?" he interrogated.

"May your Excellency be pleased to know that an imperial party is approaching the palace," the eunuch announced.

Mohammed Mirza stretched forth his hand to clasp his wife's firmly for a moment.

"Allah is merciful! Allah will keep thee, dear heart," he murmured. "Remember what I have said."

Then he rose, bent over her hand to press his lips upon it, and straightening himself, passed erect from her presence as he would have her recall him to memory — Mohammed Mirza, according to his best light, Governor of Ispahan. When the curtains had dropped behind him, he spoke in an undertone to the eunuch.

"Give ear to what I say, Salim. When the Princess passes into the Palace, be at hand with a cup of bitter coffee in the court. Dost understand?"

The eunuch bowed, acknowledging that he comprehended the significance of the Governor's order.

"Do not fail," admonished the Governor, "or your life will pay for it, Salim."

The Governor then went down to the court to gather his attendants and post the guard of honor. Then he went to the main gate to receive the guest of imperial rank. Presently the cavalcade came into view, ferashes running in advance to clear a path across the Royal Square, a group of richly attired horsemen surrounding an ornately decorated palanquin, and a rearguard of cossacks.

After formal greetings, the Governor preceded the palanquin into the court. When the palanquin had been set down at the entrance room, the Governor approached to assist the royal occupant. Presently a completely veiled figure crept forth from the sliding doors of the palanquin, and with a flash of jewels passed into the palace.

Then the Governor moved aside to the position occupied by the eunuch. He took the coffee cup and without hesitation drained its contents. He expected to fall to the pavement, in what would be given out subsequently, for the benefit of the public, as a sudden attack of heart disease caused by the realization of the overwhelming honor conferred upon him. Instead he experienced no other sensation than the agreeable stimulant of strong coffee.

Stirred with anger at what he conceived to be the disobedience of the eunuch, he wheeled around upon that faithless servant, to fall back a pace with astonishment. From the group of officers bringing up the cossack rearguard, and to whom he had given

little attention, the Shah himself strode forward. He held out his hand and cried a greeting to the Governor.

"Is it with dismay that you welcome a friend as well as your sovereign, O Mohammed Mirza?"

"A friend!" ejaculated the harassed Governor. There was a note of reproach in his voice as he added: "May Allah comprehend the expression."

"Aye, a friend, though I have lost my wager," repeated the Shah. "Come!" he enjoined, drawing the Governor apart. "I will explain the term for Allah. It is probably no secret to you that Afzal Beg is not your well wisher. With him I fell into an argument over your fidelity. I held you would obey my word to go even to your death. Afzal Beg vowed there was at least one command to which you would refuse to bow your head — that at my bidding you would not divorce your wife to marry a Princess of the royal house. I took him at his challenge, sent the firman, and came myself to prove Afzal Beg's misjudgment."

"Your Majesty," replied the Governor, "at the risk of whatever disgrace or punishment you may visit upon me, I must admit that Afzal Beg was right. But for that dog," he shook his hand toward the eunuch —

"Not so," interposed the Shah. "The eunuch acted by my secret order. In case Afzal Beg proved his side, I did not wish to lose a valuable Governor. Neither did I intend to risk an affront difficult to pass over. Therefore the woman in the palanquin, that you so gallantly assisted to alight, was not a Princess, but a slave girl intended as a present for your wife. The jewels she wears are a tribute from the Shah in Shah to the love which so holds a man's affection that he would prefer death to parting with it. And I doubt not, O Mohammed Mirza, he will prove the more faithful friend and subject who is thus first of all faithful to his wife."

A Seance and Its Sequel.*

BY ANNA HUSTED SOUTHWORTH.

THE seance took place ten years ago. Its sequel followed almost immediately. Those directly affected have both passed to the spirit world, while we, who remain, never recall the incidents without shuddering acknowledgment of their mystery and truth.

Our friends, Professor and Mrs. Carlisle, were to sail for Europe on March twenty-fifth. I arranged a farewell dinner for the evening of March twenty-fourth, inviting four very intimate friends. A more congenial company never gathered, and there was the merriest, most personal chatting, till some one spoke of wireless telegraphy. At once the talk drifted to kindred mysteries, and some singular experiences were related which seemed quite as incredible as any that had been published by The Society for Psychical Research. While these stories were told, a violent electric storm had come, which might account for unusually excited feminine nerves, but Professor Carlisle and my husband listened with a superior air of polite incredulity, making now and then quietly satirical comments, but the Professor's pretty wife was visibly impressed, and when one lady, a widow, daringly confessed that she had often taken part in seances, and had proved herself to be a "medium," Mrs. Carlisle impulsively exclaimed —

"Oh, how exciting, Bella! Why can't we have a seance now? I should so like to interview my guardian Angel about our coming journey."

Of course the men sneered, but they helped to wheel a heavy round table to the centre of the room. Our "sensitive" friend gave necessary directions, and six of us, with deliciously creepy thrills, stood ready to take our places. The Professor and my

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husband had attempted to join us, but Mrs. Carlisle laughingly protested:

"No, you unbelievers!" she cried. "I have never seen anything like this, and I want the seance to be perfect. We must not have your adverse influence. Go to the den and smoke till we call you!"

"So?" answered the Professor with his favorite German inflection, adding, "Don't allow yourself to be excited Kitty! I shall find, in my smoke-wreaths, phantoms quite as 'spiritual' and fully as prescient, as any that you may evoke. Good luck to you! Come Tom!"

The two sceptics vanished, and we took our seats with extended finger tips just touching. All the lights had been extinguished except a tiny taper in a remote corner which seemed simply to make "darkness visible." We had gravely promised that there should be no trifling, no conscious attempt to push the table, and that we would assume a receptive state of mind, each silently asking for the manifestation of spirit presence, and concentrating our thoughts upon some loved and departed friend.

The dim light, the solemn hush, the waiting in breathless expectation, and strained attention grew oppressive. I felt distinctly every beat of my heart, and as it grew more tumultous, I absolutely *heard* its throbbing, but I kept my attention fixed on my hands, till a sudden flash from a gem on Mrs. Carlisle's finger caught my eye, and I looked at her. She was ghastly white and trembling violently. As she met my startled gaze, she half whispered —

"I smell violets, but I don't see them. Where are they?" Then, with a frightened cry —

"Oh! What is it? My hands are growing numb! I can't lift them! *See! The table is really moving!"*

We all felt it slipping beneath our fingers. Then, it slowly rocked, stopped, and again back and forth it swayed, making us bend forward to keep our places. A tingling sensation ran up through my arms to my shoulders, and a sudden wave of peculiarly chill air swept through the room, while our priestess uttered a low warning: —

"Hush! Oh, *hush!"* she whispered, and then gravely asked —

"Are there spirits present?"—

I was sitting next the lady and I almost bounded from my chair when, directly beneath my hands, three quick, sharp raps were given, meaning "Yes."

Our directress questioned:—

"Have you a message for any one?"

Again the three taps.

"Is it for me?"

One loud rap was the response, meaning "No."

We were told to ask in turn for whom the message was meant. Each one met prompt refusal, until Mrs. Carlisle timidly repeated the formula, when the assenting knocks were heard. Wide-eyed and deathly pale, but resolute, the little lady inquired:—

"Is this the spirit of my Mother?"

"Yes."

"Are you really present?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that we are to sail for Europe to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"How long shall we stay in London?"

Only silence, and our directress murmured:—

"You must put your question so the answer may be either 'Yes' or 'No.'"

Mrs. Carlisle thought an instant, and then asked:—

"Shall we spend the season in London?"

"No."

As if fully assured that she was speaking to an individual, and quite forgetting the rest of us, she exclaimed—

"Oh, Mamma! We have planned to stay there at least till June. Harold knows so many people. His work will keep him. We can't leave before June!"

Dead silence, while breathlessly we all waited.

"Can't we stay till June?"

"No."

"Are we going to Scotland first?"

"No."

"Does danger threaten us?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Carlisle gasped a little, looked round with dilated eyes, and then, bending over the table, she half whispered —

"Is the danger at sea?"

"No."

"In London?"

"Yes."

"From the motor?"

"Yes."

"Can it be avoided?"

"No."

We all recoiled at this reply, so pitilessly brief, when once more that wave of strangely chill air swept over us, while our friend pleaded in vain for more definite information. At length, she sank back exhausted, and our "sensitive" said: —

"I think the spirits have gone. I cannot feel them any longer."

We waited while she made several inquiries. It was useless. We loosened our tired hands, the lights were turned on, and we saw the Professor standing behind his wife. No one had noted his coming, and our priestess, looking up, said: —

"Ah! I understand why the spirits fled. Your defiance was resented. I wish you had stayed away a little longer!" The Professor bowed, and taking his wife's hand, exclaimed —

"Why, Kitty! Your hand is like ice, and you are shaking! Was it so exciting? What happened?"

Very soberly Mrs. Carlisle replied.

"Oh, Harold! My Mother came to me! She says that our voyage will be safe, but that we are not to stay in London for the season, and that we are not to go to Scotland at all. I could not find out why, nor where we are to go, but Harold, dear! We must give up our motor trip! Danger threatens!" The Professor threw back his head and laughed.

"Nonsense, Kitty! I didn't think you were so credulous! You forget that we are taking our own car, that I know all 'its tricks and its manners' and that I am much too cautious to take any risks. *I* am arranging this trip. You shall stay in London as long as you like, and we shall motor to Scotland *just as sure as*

I live, and I'm rather a healthy specimen," he concluded, striking his chest a resounding blow. Then, drawing a long delighted breath, he exclaimed —

"Oh, how delicious! Where are the violets? There is no flower that I love so well. Kitty," — pinching his wife's cheek — "if those meddlesome ghosts do kill me, remember I want heaps of violets on my casket."

Her startled, horrified cry —

"Oh, Harold! *Don't* joke about it!" touched him.

"Why, little wifie! You mustn't let your nerves upset you in this way. I won't have it. A month hence you will laugh at these foolish fears," and he quoted — in ringing tones: —

"I am the *Master* of my fate!"

Our party broke up with loving, hopeful farewells, and our friends sailed the next day. A cablegram duly announced their safe arrival, and, as soon as possible, a letter followed from the Professor, detailing plans for what promised to be a gay and busy month in London. Mrs. Carlisle would write immediately, and the professor was glad to say that the sinister impression of that seance had vanished, since they had used the motor every day without the smallest mishap.

That night, I had a strangely vivid dream. I seemed to be in a hansom cab, driving rapidly through Piccadilly. I recognized St. James' Church, the Burlington Arcade and other familiar buildings, till the cab turned into Dover street, stopping at "Brown's," my favorite hostelry. The hall porter, usually ready with an eager welcome, greeted me with only a grave bow, and, without a word, preceded me, as if I were expected, to a room on the first floor. When he opened the door, a flood of violet perfume poured forth, and wondering, I entered a darkened chamber, where, weeping convulsively Mrs. Carlisle knelt beside *a casket heaped with violets!* No other flowers were visible. Masses of violets banked the mantel, violets, purple and white, filled great bowls, and on the breast of the dead Professor, lay a loose cluster of the long-stemmed Russian blossoms.

Choking with emotion, I went forward, only glancing at the calm majesty of our friend's fine face, and softly touched the head of the sobbing mourner. She started, raised her despair-

ing eyes, and stretched out her arms with a most pathetic, imploring gesture, when the overpowering fragrance seemed to make me faint, I felt myself reeling, and, flinging out my arms for some support, I struck one hand so sharply against the casket that the pain waked me. For an instant I could not understand where I was. The clocks just then chimed five, the gray dawn was creeping through my blinds, and I saw that I was in my own bed.

The dreadful dream had fled, but my hand ached smartly for in my dream I had dashed it against the night table, and my nerves were still quivering with the horror of the vision. Looking about, I drew a long shuddering sigh of relief, and murmuring, "Thank Heaven! Dreams go by contraries," I crushed the pillows round me and slept till broad daylight.

While I dressed, the details of the dream came back with such haunting insistence that I went at once to the library, flinging up the blinds to let the sunlight fall upon a fine pastel portrait of our dear "Professor." Oh, it was good to meet the kind laughing look in the painted eyes, to realize the perfection of the likeness! Such splendid, vigorous life, radiated from every line of the picture, that I smiled happily and turned to meet my husband's bright "Good Morning," feeling with Pippa, *"All's right with the world."*

The morning mail had come, bringing a delightful letter from Mrs. Carlisle, which I read aloud. This was the closing sentence:

"We are both well and very happy, finding London and London friends as charming as ever, but Harold thinks we would better make our Scotch trip now, before the weather grows warmer, so we mean to start to-morrow, and we hope to be here again by the middle of May, when there will be one mad social rush till August. The motor behaves beautifully, and I am ashamed of my belief in that 'lying spirit.' No more *seances* for me, my dear!"

We both laughed at the assertion, and then, altogether reassured, I told "Tom" of my dream. While I was repeating it, something of its awful dismay and horror again seized me, and I finished shuddering, as I said:—

"Oh! it was too hideously real!"

"Nothing but too much rabbit, Honey!" he retorted, and I laughed, when there rang out a sharp report like a pistol shot. It sounded from the library, just across the hall. Tom dropped his newspaper and we both sprang to our feet, rushing from the room together. Everything in the library looked as usual, and we were completely mystified till we saw the Professor's portrait.

The heavy plate glass over the picture was evenly split from top to bottom, and only retained by the frame, which, while we gazed, gave way. The glass came crashing down, followed by the portrait, which fell on its face at our feet.

We stood aghast for an instant in stunned amazement. I know that I moaned, and I saw my husband grow white, as he carefully lifted the portrait, which was unharmed. The dear eyes still held their happy glance!

There was no accounting for the disaster in any reasonable way. The frame was unbroken! It had only loosened just enough to release the painting, but we could find no visible starting at the joints. It was so uncanny, so mysterious, that we left the room silently, strangely moved.

A loud peal of the door bell startled us afresh. My husband impulsively answered it, finding a messenger boy with this fatal cablegram:

"Brown's, Dover Street. Harold dead. Returning. Arrive Saturday. HILDA."

That was all.

Just one month after that gay dinner, and that strange seance, we attended the Professor's funeral. Alas! His brave declaration —

"I am the Master of my fate!"

was as futile as so many of our human assertions prove to be.

When my poor friend could talk of her sorrow she said sadly:

"I never can bear to look at a motor now! Oh! My poor Harold! He so loved his life, and we were so happy, that I used to say Heaven could give no greater delight than we had. Why, Oh, why, did we not heed that warning? You know the brake failed to work!"

The haunting memory of my dream, with its vivid picture of that violet-filled room made me ask: —

"Did your London friends send flowers, as we do here?"

"Oh, yes, quantities of them, and curiously, every one sent violets. Do you remember how Harold loved them, and his request that his casket might be heaped with them? I placed a large cluster on his breast, and the casket was hidden as with a purple pall."

Again I felt that chill which had marked our seance, and again the odor of violets turned me faint.

The Hand of Fatima.*

BY VIRGINIA DUPUY HOLTON.

PICK CRANDALL picked up the trinket only a moment too late to restore it to its owner. He recognized it at once as the Hand of Fatima, an Oriental emblem of Good Luck, similar to one he had brought from Algiers last year to his younger brother.

In the young lady's mad dash from the New York to the Boston sleeper at Albany, she had lost the jewel from her gold chatelaine trappings. Crandall knew this because of the minuteness with which he had studied every detail about the occupant of the next section but one to his own.

He ran across the station toward the Boston train just in time to see it pull out. As he caught a glimpse of his fellow passenger through the rapidly passing car window, he held the jewel up and saw her dismayed recognition of it.

Stifling an unholy utterance against a Providence which had defeated such a romantic means of introduction, he pocketed the trinket and barely gained the steps of his own sleeper as it moved off over the tracks leading to the suddenly detestable New York. Only twenty-four hours ago, with his fellow "frats" awaiting him there, it had seemed the most desirable spot in the universe. Such is the transforming power of love at first sight!

He seated himself with the poignant realization that he, as well as she, had lost something. When again would he ever see such an attractive bit of girlhood as the owner of the souvenir he possessed? She had just that elusive quality of dainty refinement he had always looked for as the chief charm to admire in a girl. For the young collegian was unconsciously exacting in his taste and many friendships a less fastidious person would have enjoyed had been denied him on account of this critical trait.

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He sought the smoking compartment, now empty. The half-smoked cigarettes piled up at his elbow, as he pondered over the diabolical trend of circumstances. Why had he not gone directly back to college? What kind of a shindy were those terriers framing up anyway, to perpetrate in New York? Could the owner of the Hand of Fatima have been returning to school? Again the hopelessness of ever finding her began to weigh on his spirits.

He took the little emblem from his pocket for a more leisurely inspection. It was far more elaborate than any he had remembered seeing while in Algiers. Each finger nail was a small diamond, while the different fingers were ringed with precious stones.

His spirits rose with almost childish delight at the thought of wearing it. Certainly it would mount stunningly for a scarf pin! But he was too impatient to await that process. He thought of his watch fob. Hastily jerking the seal from its place, with almost tender care he fastened in its stead the newly found treasure.

"Pipe the fob, fellows!" was the greeting Dick received from the boys who met him. But no amount of teasing or bullying disclosed any information concerning it. Jack Owens, with an uncomfortably keen intuition, suspected a live wire connection between the piece of jewelry and Crandall's strange disinclination even to join them in their pranks, where he had heretofore been a ringleader.

It was almost a week later that the students were corralled and herded off to college.

Dick's last hope faded when he received a reply, to his inquiry of the Railroad Company, that no one had applied to them for an article such as he described as having found.

The remembrance of the dainty beauty of the girl still held him enthralled when the Glee Club started on its spring tour.

The first concert was to be given in the home town of a college for girls. Dick was their star performer on the banjo and was down for a barytone solo as well.

The college song-birds filed into the dining-room of the small hotel for supper, the evening on which they were to sing for the fair students.

Crandall had hardly seated himself when, from among a table full of young women near them, he saw the girl of his dreams.

"What's the matter — off your feed, Dickie boy?" inquired Fred Gibbs, sitting next to him.

But there was no room in Crandall's crowding thoughts for aught than the crisis of the moment.

The girl was seated facing him. Instead of showing any sign of recognition, as their eyes met, she turned her head quickly away. With furtive glances, the young man's hungry eyes devoured her delicately beautiful features in their frame of brightly massed hair. He resolved to make an opportunity of meeting her at the dance the College was to tender them after the concert. Dick Crandall was courageous enough to stalk a lion in Africa, but he balked at approaching any nearer than he was the girl whose acquaintance he so coveted.

He wondered how these young women happened to be taking their evening meal at the little hotel. Suddenly, as if in appreciation of their presence, Bruce Stanton gave the signal and these melodious, light-hearted fellows vented their exuberance of spirit in a drinking song. At its conclusion, the glasses clinked with glances directed toward the girls opposite them.

Dick Crandall's clear voice suddenly ceased and his glass almost fell from his fingers as he beheld the girl of his fastidious choice eating her pie with a knife! His gaze became transfixed. Not one, but many mouthfuls did she take in this shockingly offensive manner! The blow was crushing! He could not reconcile such ill-breeding with the air of refinement the girl conveyed. He inwardly denounced the Hand of Fatima as an omen of ill luck. He challenged the sentiment "Better to have found and lost, than never to have found at all!" In his misery he was forced to admit that she was impossible.

With a sigh he left the table along with the others, undergoing much upbraiding for leaving them to go to his room.

"Say, Dickie, you don't have to start to dress so early. You've got us all licked a mile in looks anyway," bantered James Stillman.

"Just wear that fob of yours and you'll put out their eyes all right," chimed in Brick Wellman.

Some indefinable impulse bade him to wear the fob, so that later when he appeared on the stage, more than one girl recognized the jewel that Betty Pattington had lost and the handsome young man she had since talked of by the hour.

Crandall's song was the hit of the evening. The whole Glee Club felt he had never sung better and they shared his pride in the applause which demanded an encore. With charming abandon he sang "I know a maiden fair," directing many glances to the seat where sat a certain maid who truly looked tantalizingly fair. How deceptively patrician were her finely chiseled features!

In the recklessness of the instant, he decided to go in for an evening's fun. He would allow himself the privilege of basking in the radiance of her beauty just this once and he would try for the moment to banish the tragic recollection of the pie.

Less than an hour later, he bowed over Betty Pattington's atrociously bad mannered hand in acknowledgment of his introduction to her.

Almost before he had straightened himself, she was speaking: —

"Oh, Mr. Crandall, I cannot tell you how mortified I was in the hotel this evening." She blushed divinely, he thought. "The Phi Kappas were initiating me and because they knew your Glee Club were coming, they made me do the humiliating stunt of eating my pie with a knife." At this juncture, Crandall with difficulty restrained himself from relieving the tension by a college yell. "I think after that initiation, I should be admitted to the Gates of Paradise, don't you, Mr. Crandall?"

"I have been," he said, promptly, voicing a thought of somewhat incoherent meaning to the girl beside him.

Catching the blank expression of Miss Pattington's face, he stammered: "I beg your pardon. May I see your program?"

And after one of the many dances he had daringly appropriated, Dick Crandall made the most important transaction of his life by bartering the Hand of Fatima in exchange for the hand of Betty Pattington.

Cough Again.*

BY M. WOOD BRICKELL.

I FORGET how he first came to be one of our exclusive circle, but I think the passport to our friendship must have been his looks, for Courtland Armstrong was good to look at. A tall, splendid young fellow, with bronze face, fine teeth, and intelligent gray eyes. I don't think there was a flaw in his make up. Moreover, he could be vastly amusing and immensely entertaining when he chose, so that the women pronounced him fascinating while we men more moderately agreed him to be a jolly good fellow.

When the social wheel swung round, somehow Courtland Armstrong stepped to the helm. He was included in the most informal affairs and led all the cotillions with the grace of a young deer.

It was not surprising that under such agreeable circumstances as the advent of Lent, we all gladly accepted Mrs. McGuire's invitation to a house-party; for Carnival Week, with its round of pleasures, had left most of us pale and hollow eyed.

The McGuire country home was elevated by one lofty story from the flower garden which surrounded the house. It was not a place of great size, but some of the luxurious accommodations it formerly afforded were still retained. The windows of the drawing-room commanding a delightful view of a diversified country, ending in an occasional glimpse of the great Mississippi, through the row of evergreen magnolias that stood sentinel on its banks. In the background, groups of venerable oaks majestically waved their banners of moss. But the scenery after all was not as interesting as our little party gathered within. Of course young Armstrong was with us. I remember how strong and handsome he looked, a beautiful piece of God's workmanship.

We abandoned ourselves to amusement and enjoyed nature during our rambles. It was while walking in the beautiful woods that

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one day we suddenly came upon, at the turn of a foot-path, a hideous old crazy woman that had lived for many years in the neighborhood.

"Will you have your fortunes told?" she inquired.

Being in a cheerful mood I extended my palm, which she looked at carefully and then said scornfully :

"My good sir, you have a miserable hand, which puzzles my old brain. You are neither one thing nor another. Neither wise nor stupid, neither bad nor good, neither fortunate nor unfortunate; without virtue or vice. Nothing at all can be prophesied." I drew away.

"A sort of nonentity," I suggested.

"An unmeaning hand and countenance," she replied.

Miss Nance put her hands behind her back. "I don't care to have my character exposed to the daylight," she declared.

Quickly and forcibly the old hag grabbed Courtland's unwilling hand. She held it firmly between her bony fingers, then said in a tone of deep sorrow:

"A descendant from wicked blood; an evil scion of evil ancestors. You are destined the last of your race, and fortunately — for what begins in evil must end in evil — your children would be more evil still. Your expression, your whole countenance denotes the murderer. Son, son, in that splendid frame lies a soul black with sin. Beauty! Oh, thou fatal gift of Heaven!" A gust of wind showered us with dry leaves. "You will waft misery and misfortune even as the wind scatters these leaves about our heads. You are an evil son of evil ancestors." The woman ran shrieking into the thick woods.

"Well," I laughed, "Courtland, your career will be a little more checkered than mine."

I was terrified to see him turn ghastly pale. With an unsteady hand he wiped the moisture from his brow.

"She is mad," he exclaimed, "too crazy to be at large." This was his only comment as we wended our way home.

A stranger had joined the house party in the afternoon of our second week in the country. He was clad in gray with a heavy black band around one coat sleeve which denoted the recent death of one near of kin. His identity was unknown to our crowd, but

it was rumored that he was a crack whist player. For this reason I felt a secret elation, after coffee was served in the drawing-room and bridge tables were laid out, that he should have fallen to my lot as partner.

The game was an interesting one and we were winners until some one in the room coughed, a peculiar clearance of the throat, when a deadly pallor overspread my partner's countenance as he clutched his cards in a mighty grip. Leaning forward, with half closed eyes, he muttered a scarcely audible "bridge it" which led me to try diamonds when thirty was lost on the hand and the rubber won by our opponents.

My partner had been preoccupied throughout the hand and when it was over, pushed back his chair and crossed over to the fireplace, where he stood in silence and abstraction. He seemed so engrossed in his own thoughts that we took it for granted he wished to discontinue the game and arose from the table.

He stood for several seconds critically examining the other players in the room, then slowly crossed over to a table where sat Courtland Armstrong and Miss Nance McGuire. She, with the hospitality of all southern women, rose and begged him to take her place, but he courteously refused.

"I am going to watch the game," he said, in a low and cautious tone, "watch the game — and wait for some one to cough again." He once more carefully examined, one by one, the players at the other tables.

Miss McGuire raised her eyebrows interrogatively and I, who had followed him, begged an explanation. He was loath to interrupt the game, but our entreaties were so urgent that he finally acquiesced. Placing one hand lightly on the back of Miss Nance's chair he told us his queer tale:

"Five years ago on the fifteenth of February, I was awakened about midnight by a man nervously clearing his throat, just below my window — a peculiar, indescribable sound. I quickly raised my sash and heard moans and groans in the distance. When I reached my brother's side I found him fearfully injured about the head. It would be too gruesome to go into detail," he said, sadly and slowly, as if recollecting the horror of the incident, "he had been cruelly dealt with. I hold but one

clue to his assailant's identity — and that is his cough."

"Your poor brother died?" whispered Miss Nance, sympathetically, as she glanced at the black band about his coat sleeve.

"He suffered worse than death," he replied. "From unconsciousness he lapsed into imbecility. My mother, a year later, died of a broken heart, and I have been hunting — hunting ever since — and waiting for that man to cough again."

There was a long pause, the narrator stood as motionless as a bronze statue. Courtland Armstrong, whose features were grave and still and whose eyes were immovably fixed on a pack of cards before him, calmly asked:

"Could not your brother have been struck down in self-defense?"

"A contemptuous smile played about the corners of young North's mouth. "If such was the case," he replied, "why did the coward flee from justice?"

His story cast a gloom over his listeners and we were glad that the striking of eleven reminded us of bedtime.

That night, capricious February turned a cold shoulder on our little party, and rain and sleet were followed by snow that fell thick and fast. When I looked out of my window next morning, things seemed transformed. The sunbeams were playing catcher over a carpet of immaculate white — too pure a setting for the enactment of a fearful tragedy.

Miss Nance was the first to notice Courtland's absence. She commented several times on his non-appearance at the breakfast table, but it was not until mid-day that we thought of looking for him. Then our fears grew as each hour passed without his reappearance.

Some large flakes of snow, almost as large as leaves, were now in the air. They began to waver and whirl and fall faster and faster, and overhead a large yellow cloud gathered. The weather was intensely cold, the wind blew furiously through the leafless trees, showering our shoulders with icicles. When darkness overtook us, guided by torches and lanterns, and chilled to our very hearts, we continued our determined hunt. Anxiety and fatigue oppressed us and our spirited words of courageous hope and anticipation at finding Courtland unhurt froze on our lips.

Shrill as the eagle's cry we sent shout after shout through the woods, only to hear the echo amongst the distant pines.

At dawn we found him, miles away and miles back of the house. Will I ever forget it! He had crawled into the hollow of a tree, poor fellow, to shield himself from the tempest that howled and rumbled and fell around him like blindness. His legs alone lay exposed and these were frozen stiff. With dreary wretchedness we lifted him gently. God! what a look of suffering was on his haggard face.

Five hours later a surgeon gave out the fearful news that his legs must be amputated. We tried hard to suppress our feelings. It seemed a shocking crime to maim a thing so beautiful. But Courtland's pitiful moans and groans and heartrending entreaties for relief led to a hasty operation. Below the knees they were taken away — how I shuddered to think of it! — but all to no avail. Gangrene set in up higher and his suffering grew tenfold. He asked that I sit up with him, and with a heart full to overflowing I took my place. For hours he lay. All color, all motion, all breath seemed gone. At midnight the poor fellow turned his head as best he could and faced me. I caught a gleam of some hidden emotion and leaned forward to catch what he might have to say.

"Old boy," he murmured, "I tried to make Southdown because — " a deathly pallor overspread his countenance already distorted with pain — "because — I — was — afraid to cough again."

He cleared his throat nervously, with that strange sound that had so disconcerted my whist partner, clutched convulsively at his throat, and passed to his judgment.

Momotombo and the Kaiser.*

BY HUBERT L. SMITH.

TUMBISCO is not a kind of chili sauce, but it is just as hot. Tumbisco is a Central American republic. It is ten degrees above the equator and one hundred and ten above zero, and it takes a bank cashier nearly three weeks to get there from San Francisco. To the outside world Tumbisco is of no earthly consequence. Just a quarantine-yellow blotch on the map with a dot for the capital and some wriggly streaks for the earthquakes. Men only go to Tumbisco to bury themselves. Sometimes they succeed. More often a couple of immune darkies do the job for them.

Strange things occur in Tumbisco. Short of a sudden fashion for hard work, nothing could happen in that versatile republic that would surprise anybody. Take the Schizzler indemnity episode, for instance. Had it occurred anywhere else, one would hesitate to recount it. He might be accused of exaggeration.

Now Tumbisco has quite as many peculiarities as one small, unsanitary wedge of turbulence has any right to have, but only four things count for much. These four things are Momotombo, Cordova, Quato, and Schizzler. Momotombo is a little dark-complected volcano that squats on the seacoast and raises more commotion than any little volcano would dream of raising outside of disorderly Tumbisco. Cordova is the capital of the republic. It is situated at the head of a deep bay sweeping around the black, stubby toes of Momotombo. Nestled close up to that uneasy little mountain, its cite is undulating — or is most of the time, anyway — and what with the picturesque cathedral and the cocoanut palms, it is most pleasant to view Cordova from the deck of a steamer. Most Americans in Tumbisco would almost risk extradition to view Cordova from a steamer.

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Cordova is the chief because the only port of Tumbisco. It is also the seat of the constitutional government. The constitutional government at the time of the indemnity episode was a fat, jolly old fellow. General Elfego Quato had then been seated on Cordova a good many years, and I dare say he weighed more than any two other governments in Central America put together.

Schizzler was the last of the four factors in Tumbiscoan economy, but he was almost as important and almost as fat a factor as Quato himself. Schizzler was the whole coffee industry of Tumbisco. He had the exclusive concession for growing coffee and for exporting coffee, and just how many coffee plantations Schizzler owned in Tumbisco, nobody but Schizzler ever kept track of. Schizzler was the only German in the republic, in fact the only subject of the Kaiser in the remotest degree concerned in matters Tumbiscoan. Schizzler was also German consul. This was a happy coincidence, for a more efficient consul than Schizzler never held office. Early and late he was all for the interests of the German colony. Patriotism was a mania with Schizzler.

Indeed, Schizzler carried his zeal to an extreme. Although the plump person of Quato had adorned the Government Palace at Cordova for a good many years, the presidential bee had continued to buzz hopefully within the sombrero of many a Tumbiscoan. Revolution, next to cock fighting, was still the leading industry. Now to a consul that held the German interests at heart it was not hard to see that each and every revolution worked grievous injury to the Schizzler coffee plantations. So it came about that the consul's chief official duty was voicing demands for indemnity from the government that permitted such abuses. As a rule, it is true, none of the revolutionists ever got within sight of the Schizzler plantations, but Schizzler never allowed their negligence to interfere with German interests. He demanded indemnities just the same. Quato never paid these claims, but every fresh claim strengthened Schizzler's case at the Berlin office. So Schizzler bided his time and continued to plant coffee — coffee and the seeds of insurrection.

Matters finally came to a head. That bilious little volcano, Momotombo, succumbed to one of his bad spells. First he shook with a violent ague. Then he got peevish and worked himself

into the ugliest kind of a temper, grumbling and slamming things around more than even a volcano with a spell of liver has any excuse for doing. Momotombo does not fire up his main crater on such little occasions. He utilizes a small auxiliary crater about one-quarter way up the side of his cone. Cordova farther up the bay is out of the range of these outbreaks of Momotombo's petulance, but the first shock tumbled down a mud house on the nearest Schizzler plantation and a gentle shower of large, hot boulders pattered on the leaves of the Schizzler coffee trees.

This was the most substantial loss that Schizzler had ever enjoyed. It was even better than a revolution. The consul was jubilant. Down the coast, across the isthmus, and under the Atlantic, straight to Berlin sped his message :

" Chaotic interior conditions have reached coast. Great destruction German property. Government refuses protection. Ultimatum by cable alone save German prestige and secure payment previous German claims."

Having made this bluff, Schizzler waited. But the wrath of the War Lord of Germany did not arrive by wire.

In Berlin the message was passed from bureau to bureau, and in each it was indexed and tabulated and cross-referenced and filed in triplicate, until it finally reached the uppermost cog in the Imperial diplomatic machine. Now this uppermost cog was a testy, fierce-whiskered cog, and he was in a particularly vindictive mood that day. Both his sovereign and his *wienerwurst* had just violently disagreed with him. Besides he was tired of complaints from Tumbisco. Seizing a cable blank, he wrote :

" Capt. August Schlatchenspieler,
Commanding Cruiser *Dunderblitzen*,
Puerto Pizarro, Honduras, C. A.
" Proceed at once to Cordova and force immediate settlement of German claims. Bombard if necessary."

Puerto Pizarro is about eight hours' run from Cordova. In less than half an hour after receipt of her orders, the *Dunderblitzen* saluted the barbed wire fortifications that command the entrance to Puerto Pizarro's harbor, and under forced draft stemmed the lazy blue swells of the open Pacific. Captain Schlatchenspieler was not the man to lose time.

Off duty, the Captain was a big, red-faced, convivial human

being with a thirst for beer and a voice that would carry farther than a six-inch gun. On duty, his face remained red and his voice moved up to the ten-inch class, but he was not a human being. He was an efficient device. A German officer, you know, is a mechanism running much on the principle of a music-box. The tunes he is designed to play are perforated into him permanently before he is issued from the officer factory. Schlatchenspieler was now set to the quickest staccato selection in his repertoire. He could be depended upon to play it through to the end and without the slightest variation whatever.

It was some time after midnight when the *Dunderblitzen* drew abreast of Cordova Bay and turning her nose landward steamed slowly into the mouth of the harbor. The night was dark. High hills loomed vaguely on either side, while miles up the bay a few lights still twinkled in the sleeping capital. Swinging her searchlight from side to side, like a self-satisfied elephant swaying his trunk, the big fighting machine slipped between rocky headlands. A fresh breath of growing things floated off shore, but no sound of life reached the cruiser. Momotombo had been dozing for half an hour.

Momotombo awoke with a start. Something was moving in strictly forbidden territory below. He opened a jaunticed red eye and glared meaningly at the trespasser. The *Dunderblitzen* forged steadily ahead. Such temerity was unheard of ; properly incensed, Momotombo emitted a deep rumble and discharged a few tons of cobblestones from his side-door crater. Momotombo was giving fair warning.

Whistling eerily one stone described a neat parabola through the darkness and plumped with a resounding bang on the cruiser's bridge. The dent it made in the deck-plates was just about one foot to starboard of the starboard foot of Captain Schlatchenspieler.

For ten tense seconds the Captain stood motionless, his straight, rigid figure growing momentarily straighter and more rigid with gathering wrath like a hose filling up with water. Then he exploded.

"Ach ! Schmukig Schweinhunden ! !" he roared, "Dese half-bred pig-dogs, dey haf insult der flag off Germany! Dey dare to shoot der *Dunderblitzen* mit Schlatchenspieler in command!"

"Ach!" and he shook his fist toward the dim, looming form of Momotombo, "Ach Gott, but dey shall a lesson learn, dese black, beschmukt, jammerlich, berachtungswert vermin of a banana patch, und quickly too!"

Majestically the *Dunderblitzen* swung about, a big Newfoundland turning on stiffened legs to demolish a presumptuous fiste, her black teeth bared, her every spar and stanchion bristling on end with vengeful ire. With ominous deliberation as became the actions of Nemesis, she trained her forward gun on the little spot of light gleaming out upon the dark flank of the mountain. The face of Captain Schlatchenspieler was grim, utterly relentless.

"Ach! der pig-dogs," he muttered as the great cartridge was shoved home and the breach mechanism closed with a snap, "Mit der Germans, dey as yet are not acquainted. Nor mit der Kaiser's iron handt. Not quite yet."

There was a roar, a long whining screech, and a ten-inch shell sped straight into the red, glowering optic of Momotombo. Never in all his volcanic life had Momotombo been so surprised. Never had such an indignity been offered him. This was lese-majesty! Nothing short. With a deafening bellow that fairly shook the sleepers in distant Cordova out of their beds, he answered with a whole broadside. Explosion after explosion threatened to disrupt his rocky vitals. Charge after charge of boulders shot pirouetting through the gloom. A sort of mineral pea-soup overspread the dark heavens, then descended upon the luckless *Dunderblitzen*.

This volley carried away three boats, a steam winch, and half the bridge, but Captain Schlatchenspieler, though taken aback, was not dismayed. Neither in beer nor battle was the Captain a retiring man.

"Ach!" he thundered as he ordered the ten-inch, eight-inch, six-inch machine, and Gatling guns into action, "How came dese Spanish pig-dogs by such guns. Mit German Krupps dey fight mit us, but up-stand dey cannot long against der *Dunderblitzen*. Soon vill I make dem squeal-howl, der pig-dogs."

The turrets belched lurid flame. The cruiser shivered from stem to stern with assorted concussions. While projectiles of the ten-inch, eight-inch, six-inch machine, and Gatling sizes severally and respectively flattened their obedient noses against the faintly

illuminated rocks above. The German marksmanship was superb. Momotombo's was less scientific but effective.

His next broadside left about a hundred dents on the deckplates of the *Dunderblitzen* — but nothing else worth mentioning. Shorn of her metallic lingerie she looked like an inverted and very irate coal-scuttle, but there was no thought of retreat on board the *Dunderblitzen.*

"Ach ! Five hundredt guns der pig-dogs haf !" the commander's voice was heard above the uproar, "But vhile der *Dunderblitzen* floats der Germans are not beaten. Mein men, to shoot continue. We make glory for der Faderland. Hoch der Kaiser !"

So the *Dunderblitzen* kept on raking Momotombo, and Momotombo, not one whit less persevering, kept right on raking the *Dunderblitzen.*

The night wore on. The wee small hours passed. Still the duel continued. The German ammunition was nearly gone. The German gunners were ready to drop with exhaustion. Momotombo was just warming up to business.

The east paled. Returning day, like a timid mouse, crept over the edge of the world. First, quivering feelers of gray light appeared, next the pink nose of dawn. Then reassured, broad day scampered out of hiding with tropical suddenness. And as the light of day came to Tumbisco, a great light dawned also upon Captain Schlatchenspieler. Slowly he eyed the spluttering little volcano. Slowly surveyed his battered cruiser. Saw blank German faces on long German necks protrude, one by one, from each gunport and hatch-way and turret door, as though the *Dunderblitzen* were a hydra-headed and inquisitive tortoise just coming out of her shell. One by one, each dazed, smoke-rimmed pair of eyes met the gaze of their commander, then the latter turned his glance toward Cordova. Miles away as it was, he could see that the hills were black with spectators.

"Ach! der pig-dogs!" roared the Captain.

Sheepishly the *Dunderblitzen* limped away, her departure accelerated by a ten-ton pebble administered squarely on her tail-tucked stern. And as she drew out of range, Momotombo rumbled derisively and stuck out a red tongue of flame. Perhaps he meant this as a parting insult, perhaps he was licking

satisfied chops. Captain Schlatchenspieler did not stop to decide.

It was a crest-fallen and disreputable *Dunderblitzen* that wearily dropped anchor in front of Cordova. With her masts all wry, her Roman nose flattened, and wearing her battered smoke-stack rakishly to one side, a more dissolute-looking warship never slunk home from a spree, but the crowded Cordovans excused her bacchanalian appearance. Indeed, they admired it — admired it vociferously.

Schizzler was at the water's edge to meet the Commander, and Schizzler found the Commander in a very savage humor, indeed. A more savage humor than Schizzler had dared to hope for. The collection of indemnities, the instant collection of unreasonable, ruinous indemnities, just suited the gallant Captain's mood. His conference with President Quato was brief and to the point.

Captain Schlatchenspieler dictated a treaty, dictated it standing. Tumbisco would pay the Schizzler claim in full. A special duty would be levied at the Cordova Custom House to meet the instalments, and Schizzler, himself, could supervise its collection. It took Schlatchenspieler all of five minutes to negotiate the treaty, then he marched with long German strides back to the boat landing. And Tumbisco felt that the mailed hand of the Kaiser, though sore about the knuckles, was still heavy.

The *Dunderblitzen* remained three days in port undergoing first aid to the injured, then sailed for San Francisco where convalescent cruisers may receive better care. President Quato was conciliation personified. On the eve of their departure he tendered the Germans a grand banquet. Then even Captain Schlatchenspieler thawed. Rhetoric and champagne flowed in the Presidential Palace as they never flowed before. Outside in the Plaza, the crew of the *Dunderblitzen* vied with the entire population of Cordova in celebrating the greatest fiesta of Tumbiscoan history. Beer was as the free air of heaven; rum cheap as a Castillian promise. The Government of Tumbisco stood treat to all comers. Toward morning Captain Schlatchenspieler turned on the steps of the Palace to clasp President Quato in a last farewell embrace, and President Quato fell upon the bulging breast of the Captain and shed copious tears. They corroded the Iron Cross of Prussia and three bronze medals, but they sealed the reconciliation of two